

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 1, line 2 with the following amended paragraph:

This Application is a divisional (and claims the benefit of priority under 35 USC 120) of U.S. Application No. 09/550,975, filed April 18, 2000, which is related to and claims priority from Provisional Application Serial Number 60/129,993 entitled "Suture Leader for Shuttleless Suturing", filed April 19, 1999. The disclosures of the prior applications are considered part of (and are incorporated by reference in) the disclosure of this application.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 16 with the following amended paragraph:

FIG. 2 shows a close-up view of tip 106. Tip 106 has a curved, hook-like shape for convenient delivery of a suture, as discussed further below. Eyelet 110 has ~~an~~ a tip portion 112 configured to be wider than a suture used in connection with the suturing device, and a narrowed bottom portion 114 for trapping the suture.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 20 with the following amended paragraph:

Referring now to FIGS. 3 through 6B, a method according to the present invention is shown. Suture 302 is threaded through eyelet 110 as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4 until a selected length of suture (labeled "d") is extended through suturing device 100 as shown in FIG. 4. Preferably, length d is about 2 inches. Once the selected point of suture is in eyelet 110, length d is drawn downward, as shown in FIG. 5, trapping the suture in eyelet 110. FIG. 6A shows the position of the suture in the wider top portion 112 of eyelet 110 prior to the drawing downward step. FIG. 6B shows the suture wedged into the narrowed bottom portion 114 of eyelet 110 after the downward drawing step of FIG. 5. The suture in FIG. 6B is thus trapped in the narrowed bottom portion 114 in accordance with one aspect of the invention.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 3 with the following amended paragraph:

FIGS. 7 through 10 show the use of the above described embodiment of the present invention in the repair of a gap 702 formed in tissue 704. As shown in FIGS. 7 and 8, suturing device 100 with suture 302 is partially inserted into a portion of tissue 704. Sharpened tip 106 of suturing device 100 penetrates tissue 704, thereby delivering suture 302 to the other side of tissue 704. A second tool 902 (FIG. 9) is used to assist in the release of suture 302 from eyelet 110, and to draw the short end of suture 302 the rest of the way through tissue 704 and fully disengage suture 302 from device 100 (See FIG. 10). Exhibit A shows color illustrations similar to FIGS. 7 through 10 and which may more clearly illustrate the contrast between the tool, the suture, and the tissue that is being sutured.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 13 with the following amended paragraph:

FIG. 11 shows a close-up of a tapered eyelet 110 of the type described in FIGS. 1 through 10, and further ~~illustrating~~ illustrates the orientation of the tapered eyelet 110 relative to the sharpened tip 106.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 16 with the following amended paragraph:

FIG. 12 shows a close-up of a sharpened tip 1202 with an alternative embodiment of an eyelet 1204 in accordance with the principles of the present invention. Eyelet 1202 has a tapered central portion 1205 which may trap a suture from either the top wider portion 1208 or the bottom wider portion 1210 of eyelet 1204. One advantage of this embodiment is that the device operator may disengage suture 302 from device 100 either by pulling the suture towards the wider top portion 1208 or the wider bottom portion 1210. It will be clear to one skilled in the art

that this embodiment of the present invention provides added flexibility in the manner in which the suture can be released.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 22 with the following amended paragraph:

Figures FIGS. 18 through 21 illustrate a suturing device with a locking mechanism for trapping a suture in an opening in a sharpened tip in accordance with the principles of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 18, suturing device 1800 has a handle 1802 with locking mechanism button 1804, shaft 1806, and sharpened tip 1808.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 26 with the following amended paragraph:

FIG. 19 illustrates a close-up of sharpened tip 1808, having opening 1902 and locking element 1904. Locking element 1904 is controlled by the device operator with button 1804 (FIG. 18). Locking element 1804 may be selectively placed in (1) an open position for inserting a suture into an opening in the sharpened tip and for release of the suture from the opening in the sharpened tip; (2) at least one partially closed position for capturing the suture and for controlled adjustment of the suture relative to the tip; and (3) a locked position for trapping a suture in the opening in the sharpened tip at a selected point.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 7 with the following amended paragraph:

Figures FIGS. 23 through 29 show different sharpened tips for use in different applications of the present invention. The sharpened tip 2302 illustrated in FIG. 23 extends substantially straight, ~~and~~ forward from the distal end of the device shaft. Alternatively, as shown in FIG. 24, a ~~the~~ sharpened tip 2402 may be ~~angularly~~ bent relative to the shaft in a selected direction, and angled to a side. As illustrated in FIG. 25, ~~and~~ a sharpened tip 2502 may

be further bent so that the distal portion of the tip generally points towards the proximal end of the shaft.

Please replace the abstract at page 21 with the following amended abstract:

~~The present invention provides new and useful devices~~ Devices and techniques for use in suturing. ~~These devices and techniques~~ are particularly useful in laparoscopic, arthroscopic, and/or open surgical procedures. A method of delivering a suture according to the present invention is characterized by includes providing a suture device, releasably coupling a suture to a distal end of a suture device by threading the suture through a first region of a bounded opening of the suture device and moving the suture to a second region of the bounded opening having a dimension smaller than a diameter of the suture to trap the suture in the second region, causing the tip of the suture device and a portion of the suture to penetrate a tissue penetrating a substrate with the distal end of the suture device such that a portion of the suture passes through the substrate, and releasing the suture from the distal end of the suture device, ~~so the suture may be drawn through the tissue for completion of a suturing procedure.~~ One type of suturing device according to the invention is characterized by structures and techniques for loading the suture into the device. According to still another aspect, of the present invention, different shaped suture tips are provided for the selection of the most effective tip shape for a given application. A suturing device according to the present invention may also be configured for use with a needle point swedged to a suture. Yet another type of suturing device according to the principles of present invention includes a tissue support structure disposed adjacent the sharpened tip, which may move relative to the sharpened tip to facilitate penetration of the tip through a tissue.